

LACDMH HOSTS ACTIVE SHOOTER AND WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AWARENESS PRESENTATION

By Ana De La Torre, LACDMH Disaster Services Unit

Incidents like the recent LAX shooting on November 1, 2013 highlight the importance of emergency/disaster preparedness. On November 5 and November 19, we had the privilege to hear FBI Special Agent Thomas J. Leighton talk about “Active Shooter and Workplace Violence Awareness” at our Disaster Services Unit’s second quarterly Building Emergency Coordinator (BEC) meetings. A total of 53 BECs from various LACDMH facilities attended the seminar.

Special Agent Leighton’s years of experience in civil rights, counterintelligence and counterterrorism, and current assignment in the FBI’s Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) program combine to make him an expert in active shooter situations. Below are some helpful tips he provided:

- 1) Plan ahead in your mind on what you would do in an active shooter situation.
- 2) Assess the Situation
 - a. Observe what is happening.
 - b. Orient yourself to where you are in relation to the gun shots.
 - c. Decide what you should do quickly.
 - d. Act on that decision.
- 3) Run Away
 - a. Consider several escape routes from your office in advance.
 - a. Move in an unpredictable zig-zag motion or serpentine-like motion when under fire.
 - b. Call 911 to report the incident once you are at a safe location.
- 4) Hide
 - a. If you cannot run away, hide. Consider good hiding places in advance.
 - b. Turn off room lights and silence cell phones (no vibrations either).
 - c. Look for cover or concealment.
 - i. Cover means you cannot be seen and you are protected from bullets (e.g., hiding behind a tree, cement planters, concrete posts).
 - ii. Concealment means hiding behind a door where bullets may still penetrate but the shooter might not think to shoot through the door or object.
 - d. If you have a disability or access and functional need, plan according to your limitations (e.g., find a buddy to assist you, count the steps from your desk to the stairs in case you are visually impaired and lose your cane, etc.).
- 5) Reassess Situation

Although the guidelines above cannot fully guarantee your safety, they may enable you to respond more effectively to a very challenging and potentially life-threatening situation. Consider discussing these guidelines with your fellow staff so that all of you can be better prepared to act should an active shooter situation occur at your work site.